

**CONGRESSMAN SHERWOOD BOEHLERT (R-NY)**  
**TESTIMONY TO HOUSE ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE**  
**March 1, 2001**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

It's a pleasure to appear before you today in support of our funding request for the Science Committee. We are requesting a 27 percent increase in funding for 2001, and an increase of 5 percent over the 2001 level in 2002.

As you know, this is a change from recent years when the Committee has come in requesting limited increases. But as a new Chairman in a new Congress, we are making changes in the Committee to make it more active, visible and effective, and doing so simply requires more money.

Our top priority is to strengthen the staff. To be effective and respected, the Science Committee needs a technically qualified staff, yet the number of Ph.D.s and other technical staff dwindled markedly in recent years. We have already begun to correct that; three of our four staff directors are now Ph.D.s. But attracting and retaining such qualified people costs money.

We cannot afford to be hamstrung by an outdated and limited salary structure. As the charts that accompany our budget submission indicates, the Science Committee last year had the lowest paid chief of staff, the lowest paid deputy chief of staff, the lowest paid counsel, and the lowest paid subcommittee staff directors in the House. It also had the narrowest pay range for professional staff members and the second lowest top salary for that position. We have to approach parity.

For that reason, we have asked for an increase of more than \$1 million in the salary account for this year.

This is not some “pie-in-the-sky” wish list. We are already on a path to spend almost \$350,000 more than last year on salaries just to attract the new staff we need. But without more money, we will not be able to provide any cost-of-living raises to the current staff or to rationalize our pay schedule to bring current staff up to the levels of the equivalent newer staff and to bring newer staff to full parity with other Committees. Moreover, without a larger budget, the personnel increases will eat into needed funds for equipment and other items.

Finally, on personnel, I should note that about \$500,000 of our request would be used to fund six new positions – four majority and two minority – if the Speaker is willing to raise our hiring ceiling. The Committee has added no professional staff since the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress, when our staff was cut from 85 to 60.

Yet the issues we handle have become more prominent. Our three priorities this year are education, energy and the environment – all issues of utmost importance to the nation. The President has recommended increasing education spending at the National Science Foundation as part of his budget. We have jurisdiction over the R&D aspects of energy legislation. And we have oversight over EPA research and scientific questions underlying environmental issues. So our plate is fuller than ever.

In addition, we intend to exercise our significant jurisdiction over information technology, and we’re going to have to put more energy into overseeing NASA, which is experiencing large cost overruns in the International Space Station. All these complex issues would benefit from additional staff.

Boehlert/3

I should note that our personnel budget has been – and will continue to be divided on a two-to-one with the minority; they will have full control over one-third of the salary budget, and will receive one-third of the Committee slots. Administrative staff remains a responsibility of the majority. We have had no quarrels with the minority over funding issues.

Most of the remainder of our request is devoted to increases for equipment. While the Science Committee has one of the most up-to-date, high tech hearing rooms in the House – and we're increasing its availability to Members and outside groups – most of the other Committee equipment is badly out of date. Our copiers are over 10 years old, and they literally were breaking down as we were rushing to copy our submission to you. Many of our printers are in poor condition. We have no cell phones or pagers.

And even our Committee room will require more money for repairs and replacement parts as it ages. For example, we had no microphones for our organizational meeting because of equipment failure.

In short, our budget request is a serious attempt to correct problems and fulfill needs that have accumulated over several years. It is not an unrealistic wish list. Last year, as one of our charts shows, the Committee received a far lower increase than most other Committees – indeed the lowest except for the Budget Committee. Our Committee must make up for lost time if it is to achieve its full potential. Thank you.